

Through the normal legislative process, amendments could have been offered to address some deficiencies in this bill. I know that our colleagues, Representatives CAPPS and WAXMAN, worked hard to try to address many of my concerns. I'd like to take a moment to outline some of my misgivings with this legislation.

My deepest concern about this bill, as we are considering it today, is that we are mandating that states develop a vaccine compensation program; however, we are not providing any funds to our states to fund this mandate. Mr. Chairman, we all know that most of our states are facing as serious financial problems as is the federal government. To pass this bill without any commitment to a funding level is wrong and a slap in the face to our valued "First Responders."

I am also opposed to the coercive nature of this bill that forces "First Responders" to receive vaccinations within 180 days to remain eligible for compensation. The bill provides no exceptions in any event, including if the public health department is unable to meet the deadline or if a worker has a temporary illness that prevents him or her from receiving the vaccination.

In addition, we should have openly debated an amendment that increases the onetime lump sum payment of \$262,100 to families of individuals who die or develop total permanent disability as a result of vaccination. This amount is only equivalent to 5-to-6 years of salary for the average nurse or firefighter—hardly adequate compensation for a family of dependents forced to live the rest of their lives without a working breadwinner. Likewise, this legislation caps the lifetime payout for partial or temporary disability at \$262,100 instead of providing compensation for the duration of the disability.

A thorough education and pre-screening process could significantly reduce the number of individuals adversely affected by inoculation. This is the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in response to recent deaths surrounding smallpox vaccinations. This bill, as written, fails to adequately address the CDC's concerns.

I applaud our colleague, Mr. BURR, for taking the lead on bringing this issue to the Floor of the House. I also commend Mr. WAXMAN and Ms. CAPPS who were actively working to address the deficiencies I've just highlighted. I regret that we as a body are unable to debate the solutions they propose. I look forward to working with these distinguished members in the future to find better ways to protect "First Responders" from the threat of smallpox.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT ORLANDO MORALES

HON. ANÍBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Sergeant Orlando Morales, a soldier who served in Special Operations in Afghanistan, and who died after being wounded in an ambush on Saturday in Geresk, Afghanistan, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Sergeant Morales' Special Operations Battalion took on hostile fire during a recon-

naissance mission. The United States and Puerto Rico lost a true patriot in Sergeant Orlando Morales. While I did not personally know this man, there are thousands of dedicated soldiers like him active in the armed services from Puerto Rico. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones, and with our troops in the Middle East. I am here today to recognize Sergeant Morales and his ultimate sacrifice to the United States and to Puerto Rico. I want to also take this opportunity to let my colleagues know that Puerto Ricans today, as throughout our history with the U.S., remain in steadfast commitment to our armed services.

I ask all my colleagues to respect the commitment of the Puerto Rican soldier. We must forever recognize the tens of thousands like Sergeant Morales who have died or have been wounded in combat. During the Korean War, General Douglass MacArthur said of the forces of the much-heralded 65th Infantry, the fighting Borinqueneers from Puerto Rico, "They are writing a brilliant record of achievement in battle and I am proud indeed to have them in this command. I wish that we might have many more like them." There are thousands more like them today, as Puerto Rico has undergone the greatest mobilization of reservists and National Guardsmen since Korea.

I ask my colleagues to honor the soldiers like Sergeant Morales and to recognize the ongoing Puerto Rican commitment to the United States Military.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

SPEECH OF

HON. MIKE ROSS

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 20, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 95) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2004 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2003 and 2005 through 2013:

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in objection to the treatment of our veterans in the House-passed budget. Last October, we authorized President Bush to send our men and women in uniform into battle. Is this how we show our support for the brave soldiers who are risking their lives to fulfill their missions, by slashing funding that will take care of them after they have served time taking care of us?

Last week the House managed to pass a budget that cuts veterans' benefits by \$28.3 billion over the next ten years. This includes cuts to disability payments and pensions, the Montgomery GI Bill, the VA Health Care System, and other veterans programs.

I reject the notion that we need to cut funding for veterans and retirees in order to pay for a multi-billion dollar tax cut package. During this time of military conflict, we have no business supporting tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans over benefits to provide for the needs of our veterans.

As the conference committee meets to resolve the House and Senate budget dif-

ferences, I urge them, on behalf of those who have served our country and those who are serving our country right now, to restore funding to the veterans programs that protect those who protect us.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID LASH

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 1, 2003

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and pay tribute to David Lash, the outgoing Executive Director of Bet Tzedek, The House of Justice in Los Angeles. David has made tremendous contributions to this vital organization and has been an extraordinary Executive Director these past nine years.

Bet Tzedek is a non-profit organization which offers free legal services to the poor, elderly, consumers, tenants, employees, veterans and disabled residents of Los Angeles County. It has become a true beacon of light for thousands of individuals whose rights may have been violated but who can not otherwise afford the assistance of an attorney.

Under David's superb supervision, Bet Tzedek has served over 10,000 clients each year, and the results of his leadership and his commitment to justice are inspiring. Bet Tzedek worked with attorneys from the City of Los Angeles and a large law firm to sue a landlord reputed to be one of Los Angeles' worst slumlords. The suit settled last year with the landlord pledging to maintain safe living conditions at more than 20 properties.

David has also maintained Bet Tzedek's role as a leader in helping Holocaust survivors and their heirs sue European insurance carriers for unpaid insurance claims dating back to World War II. In addition, Bet Tzedek has partnered with Public Counsel in creating a new kinship care legal program. This program facilitates the adoption of children by their grandparents when the parents are unable to provide care.

David significantly strengthened Bet Tzedek by expanding its 54-person staff, increasing fundraising revenue by over 60 percent and helping Bet Tzedek reach a more diverse group of volunteers and staff. David introduced and expanded a number of innovative programs during his tenure, including the Caregiver Advocacy Project, the Nursing Home Advocacy Project and the Employment Rights Project.

David has been a voice for the under-represented, the unrepresented and the unheard in Los Angeles. He has ably forged alliances within the public interest community and coordinated his efforts with talented staff at many of Los Angeles' large private law firms. Under his direction, thousands of individual rights have been restored and preserved.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking David Lash for his remarkable contributions and distinguished record of accomplishments. Please also join in wishing him all the best in his new position at O'Melveny and Myers, where he will resume his career as a full-time litigator and serve as the firm's Managing Counsel for pro-bono activities for the State of California.